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## Iwata Asks

Iwata Asks is a series of interviews conducted by former Nintendo Global President **Satoru Iwata** with key creators behind the making of Nintendo games and hardware.

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### **Volume 2 : The History of Handheld The Legend of Zelda Games**

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## Like an Afterschool Club

### Staff Member

Iwata-san's previous meeting is running long, so he'll be a little late.

### Tezuka

Okay.

### Nakago

I wonder what he's going to ask us about today.

### Aonuma

I haven't heard.

### Staff Member

We don't exactly know either, but maybe it'll be about the history of handheld Zelda games.

### Tezuka

Huh? Isn't Aonuma-san the main focus today?

### Aonuma

I talked a bunch last time.

### Tezuka

But I wonder if I even remember much from way back when...

### Nakago

The first handheld Zelda game was The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening<sup>1</sup>.

### Tezuka

Yeah.

1. The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening: The first game in The Legend of Zelda series for the Game Boy. It was released in June 1993. Later, a remake titled The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX was released for Game Boy Color in December 1998.

### Aonuma

Come to think of it, my strategy guide for The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening has developer's comments in it. Do you remember what you said back then, Tezuka-san?

### Tezuka

No.

**Aonuma**

That's understandable. (laughs) About making the characters for The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening, you said you wanted to create a world that was inspired by Twin Peaks<sup>2</sup>.

**Tezuka**

Oh, that's right!

**Nakago**

You said that?

**Tezuka**

Yeah. I'm glad I said that then, because I always forget such things.

**Everyone**

(laughs)

2. Twin Peaks: A television serial drama broadcast in America from 1990 to 1991. It was broadcast in Japan in 1991.

**Aonuma**

I remember you saying that, but I didn't really know what you meant. I'd like to hear about it today.

**Tezuka**

Oh, okay.

**Aonuma**

You wanted it to be like Twin Peaks, but characters that looked like Mario and Luigi were appearing.

**Tezuka**

Yeah. And Kirby.

**Aonuma**

Did you get permission from HAL Laboratory?

**Tezuka**

I don't know...

**Aonuma**

You don't remember?

**Tezuka**

No, not really. I think they approved it, but...

**Aonuma**

Is that all right?

**Tezuka**

Umm, just what did we do?

(The door opens.)

**Iwata**

Sorry you had to wait.



**Everyone**

Come on in.

**Aonuma**

We've already started! (laughs)

**Iwata**

What were you talking about?

**Nakago**

We were just thinking back over The Legend of Zelda series. Just random bits and pieces, really.

**Tezuka**

I thought Aonuma-san was the main focus today.

**Aonuma**

Why, are you trying to avoid responsibility?

**Tezuka**

Heh heh heh! (laughs)

## Iwata

Well, for their second appearance in a row today, a rare occurrence, Tezuka-san and Nakago-san are here.

I really enjoyed hearing old stories during the New Super Mario Bros. Wii session of Iwata Asks. Hopefully, I wasn't the only one having a good time. (laughs) When I heard that the firebars, which appear in Super Mario Bros. 3, had also been used early on in development of The Legend of Zelda<sup>4</sup>, I thought I absolutely must ask about it sometime when we discuss Zelda.

Then New Super Mario Bros. Wii came out for the Wii system and The Legend of Zelda came out for the DS system in December of 2009. Both of those coming out in the same month had never happened before, so I wanted to have a sort of "Mario and Zelda Festival." It's not the usual pattern, but thank you for coming today.

## Everyone

You're welcome.

3. Super Mario Bros.: An action game released for the Nintendo Entertainment System in September 1985.

4. The Legend of Zelda: An action-adventure game released simultaneously with the Family Computer Disk System in February 1986.

## Iwata

Tezuka-san and Nakago-san, you two, along with Shigeru Miyamoto-san were known as the "Golden Triangle," or the "Kansai Manzai (comedy) Trio." And with Miyamoto-san as the central creator, you developed the original The Legend of Zelda game while you were working on the first Super Mario Bros. But his involvement with The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening, the first handheld Zelda game, wasn't that extensive, was it?

## Tezuka

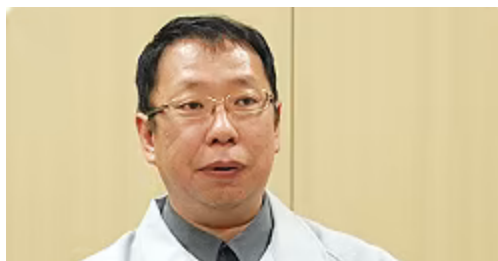
No.

## Iwata

Tezuka-san, you were the main developer of The Legend of Zelda for the Game Boy system. How did it begin?

## Tezuka

Before that, I was working on The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past<sup>5</sup>, for which I joined partway through.



**Iwata**

That was a challenging game to develop, too.

**Tezuka**

Yes, I can say that now. It was a challenge. That's why I needed to join the development team from partway through as the director. At that time, SRD's<sup>6</sup> Kazuaki Morita<sup>7</sup> was hard at work on it.

5. The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past: An action-adventure game released for the Super NES in November 1991.

6. SRD Co., Ltd.: A company established in 1979 that contracts to develop video game software programs and develops and sells CAD packages. The head office is in Osaka, but their Kyoto office is inside Nintendo headquarters. Toshihiko Nakago is company president.

7. Kazuaki Morita: A programmer at SRD who is currently involved in development of numerous Nintendo games, including games in the Super Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda series. He is a board member of SRD.

**Iwata**

Morita-san is a programmer with a long history at SRD.



Kazuaki Morita  
Member of the Board of Directors  
SRD Co., Ltd.

**Nakago**

Yes. He's the one who came up with the Hammer Bros. for the Super Mario Bros. games. He also really likes fishing.

**Aonuma**

Even now, fishing games recur in the home console The Legend of Zelda games. The one Morita-san made for The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening started all that.

**Tezuka**

That's right.

**Nakago**

He's the kind of guy who makes fishing games without even being asked.

**Iwata**

He must really like fishing! (laughs)

**Tezuka**

That's why his fishing games are really polished! He used the only Game Boy development kit we had at the time to recreate something like a Zelda game.

**Iwata**

He was experimenting to see what could be done with Game Boy.

**Tezuka**

Right. We weren't particularly planning to make a Zelda game for Game Boy, but we thought we'd try it out to see how it will work. So at first there was no official project. We'd do our regular work during normal work hours, and then work on it sort of like an afterschool club activity.

**Iwata**

Like an afterschool club?

**Nakago**

That's exactly what it was like! (laughs)



**Iwata**

That would be unthinkable now.

**Tezuka**

We definitely couldn't do it now. Then, as we were doing that, even though it was only monochrome, we noticed it was beginning to look impressive. It was our first time to develop for the Game Boy system, and it was pretty fun.

**Iwata**

How long had Game Boy been out?

**Tezuka**

I wonder... When did Game Boy come out?

**Iwata**

The Game Boy system came out in 1989, the Super NES in 1990, and then The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past...when?

**Tezuka**

That was 1991. At that time I asked to begin official development of The Legend of Zelda game for Game Boy. That's when we were able to get one more development kit.

**Iwata**

That is a very cute story. (laughs) So you officially asked for a new project to begin development on, and the number of dev kits increased from one to two.

**Nakago**

(laughs)

**Iwata**

Those were the good old days of nice, compact projects.

**Tezuka**

But at the time, we still had the idea of simply transplanting The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past to Game Boy...

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## Kirby and Chomps in Zelda

**Iwata**

So you had a hard time with it, but finally finished The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past. And just when you should have been out of breath, you started developing a game for Game Boy as a sort of "afterschool club activity." Why was that?

**Tezuka**

I can't really remember that either, but I think it was because there was a lot left over that we still wanted to do. Maybe I felt that way more than anyone else because I had joined development partway through, but I strongly desired to do more.

**Iwata**

With a game like The Legend of Zelda, you may have lots of ideas, but you can never use them all.

**Aonuma**

That is the Zelda tradition. (laughs)

**Iwata**

It began around the time of the Super NES.

**Tezuka**

I remember that we made The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening in a real peculiar frame of mind. We began in the free spirit of an afterschool club, so the contents are quite unrestrained. If you look at it, you can tell. Characters similar to Mario and Luigi appear, and Yoshi dolls appear, too.

**Iwata**

Characters like Mario and Luigi?

**Tezuka**

Yeah. (laughs)

**Iwata**

Was that all right?

**Tezuka**

It was for the Game Boy system, so we thought, "Oh, it'll be fine." (laughs)

**Everyone**

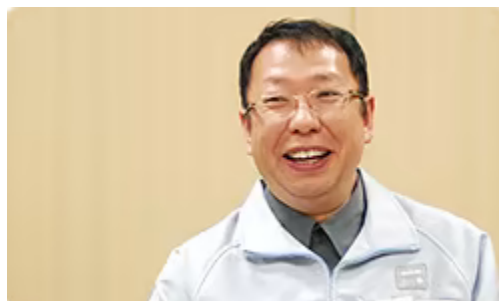
(laughs)

**Aonuma**

We couldn't do much visually anyway.

**Tezuka**

That's right. It was monochrome. We've moved along at quite a good clip in a relatively freewheeling manner. Maybe that's why we had so much fun making it. It was like we were making a parody of The Legend of Zelda.

**Iwata**

A parody of your own game? (laughs)

**Tezuka**

Yeah. (laughs)

**Iwata**

Today, if you just barged ahead using characters resembling Mario and Luigi-even if it were for a Nintendo game-it would be quite a problem.

**Tezuka**

Yeah, I'd get mad. (bluntly)

**Everyone**

(laughs)

**Nakago**

And it wasn't just Mario and Luigi, but something like Kirby, too.

**Iwata**

Huh?

**Tezuka**

Um... Kirby was in there , too. I think we asked for permission, but...

**Iwata**

Oh. (laughs)

**Tezuka**

But some people at HAL Laboratory might say they never heard anything.

**Iwata**

I suppose so. Oh well. I'm not sure how many people at that time recognized it was Kirby.

**Aonuma**

But that character appeared as one of Link's enemies, and if you got close, he would suck you up! (laughs)

**Iwata**

About that time, Kirby was still just a fledgling character, so I think people thought that it was an honor to have him appear in a The Legend of Zelda game.

**Aonuma**

And the Chomps who appear in the Mario games were also enemies. Partway through you could have them walk along with you.



**Nakago**

That's right! The SRD programmer was doing whatever he wanted and had it so you could hold onto and walk a Chomp that had previously been your enemy and have it eat flowers in front of a dungeon.

**Iwata**

Now just wait a second! Chomps in The Legend of Zelda?

**Nakago**

Yeah. They just appeared like it was normal. And Piranha Plants and Goombas , too.

**Iwata**

That certainly is unrestrained. (laughs) You wouldn't do anything like that today, would you?

**Tezuka**

No, I doubt it.

**Nakago**

If we did, I suppose you'd get mad.

**Tezuka**

Yeah, I'd get mad. (bluntly)

**Everyone**

(laughs)

**Iwata**

So, besides Tezuka-san and the SRD team, who worked on The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening?

**Tezuka**

We had (Kensuke) Tanabe-san<sup>8</sup> join early on. He thought up the sub-events and stuff like the "Straw Millionaire" parts.

**Aonuma**

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening was the first time for that, right?

**Nakago**

Yes. It started then.

**Tezuka**

Then later on (Yoshiaki) Koizumi-san<sup>9</sup> joined.

**Iwata**

That's quite an extraordinary team! (laughs)

**Tezuka**

Koizumi-san had joined the company one or two years earlier and was doing artwork.

**Iwata**

He was working with (Yoichi) Kotabe-san<sup>10</sup>, right? But if he was in a completely different division, then how...

**Tezuka**

It looked like he'd be good at creating a story, so we lured him into our afterschool club.

**Iwata**

Really, it would be unthinkable today! (laughs)

8. Kensuke Tanabe: He worked on the scripts for The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past and The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening. Later, he was involved in development of numerous games, such as the Metroid Prime series, Chibi-Robo! and Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland. He is in Nintendo's Software Planning and Development Division.

9. Yoshiaki Koizumi: After working on the development of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time and The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask, he was involved in the development of 3D Mario games such as Super Mario Sunshine and Super Mario Galaxy, as well as of DSiWare such as Flipnote Studio. He is at Nintendo's Tokyo Software Development Office.

10. Yoichi Kotabe: An animator who has worked on animation such as Heidi, Girl of the Alps. After leaving Toei Animation, he joined Nintendo, where he began designing characters such as Mario. Currently he is active as a freelance agent.

## Tezuka

Koizumi-san was in charge of the opening movie and main story . He's a romantic, and I think that shows in The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening. He was in charge of the whole flow of the story.

## Iwata

What was Miyamoto-san doing at that time?



## Tezuka

I think he was busy with something and didn't pay us much mind.

## Aonuma

Oh, just like me this time with The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks.

## Iwata

(laughs) I do hear lots of Entertainment Analysis and Development staff members, not just you guys, say he's busy and doesn't pay them much mind. "Miyamoto-san's busy right now and won't pay us any attention!"

At any given time, Miyamoto-san tends to have something that he gives priority above everything else. While he's absorbed in that, he basically lets everyone else go.

## Aonuma

(nods agreement)

**Iwata**

Were you able to complete The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening without any detours?

**Tezuka**

Yeah. I don't remember that much detours at all.

**Iwata**

I thought it was a tradition for working on a Zelda game to turn into a kind of exercise in suffering.

**Tezuka**

I remember it was fun working on it, and when it was over, I remember us talking to each other how fun it was.

**Iwata**

Almost like you had awakened from a dream.

**Tezuka**

Oh, I get it! Like in the game! (laughs)

**Iwata**

Some of our readers might want to play The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening now. (laughs)

**Tezuka**

I think it would be fun to play even today.

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## Make All the Characters Suspicious Types

**Aonuma**

It wasn't until The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening that the series started having a proper plot.

**Nakago**

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past had a bit of a story, but a story running throughout the whole game really started with The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening.

**Iwata**

That must mean Koizumi-san the romantic, who was in charge of story, had quite a large influence over the general direction of The Legend of Zelda series.

**Aonuma**

That's right.

**Iwata**

Koizumi-san is probably sneezing about now. (laughs)

(Editor's note: In Japan, it is customary for people to jokingly say to each other that if someone sneezes for no reason that it must mean someone is talking about the person who is sneezing.)

**Everyone**

(laughs)

**Iwata**

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening, which Tezuka-san did whatever he wanted with, had quite an influence over subsequent Zelda games.

**Tezuka**

I wonder about that...

**Iwata**

As far as the general flow goes, I think so.

**Tezuka**

I didn't try to do that on purpose, though. Oh, right, about Twin Peaks...

**Aonuma**

Whoa, here we go. (laughs) Iwata-san, do you know about Twin Peaks?

**Iwata**

No. Bring me up to speed. (laughs)

### Tezuka

We were talking about this before you arrived. I was talking about fashioning The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening with a feel that's somewhat like Twin Peaks. At the time, Twin Peaks was rather popular. The drama was all about a small number of characters in a small town.



### Iwata

Okay...

### Tezuka

So when it came to The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening, I wanted to make something that, while it would be small enough in scope to easily understand, it would have deep and distinctive characteristics.

### Iwata

That makes me think of Wuhu Island in Wii Sports Resort<sup>11</sup>. The events occur at a well-known location, so background elements come into clarity. You were thinking about that for The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening?

11. Wuhu Island: The island that is the setting of Wii Sports Resort and Wii Fit Plus. The general concept is to develop a wide variety of games entailing adventures and other activities that take place on the island. For more on the "Island Concept," see Iwata Asks: Wii Sports Resort.

### Tezuka

I remembered it earlier. (laughs)

### Aonuma

At the time, I didn't know what he was talking about. I was like, "What is this guy talking about?" (laughs) But since Twin Peaks was popular at the time...

### Iwata

You thought he just wanted to be trendy?

### Aonuma

Yeah. (laughs) I thought, "You really want to make The Legend of Zelda like that?!" Now the

mystery is solved. (laughs)

When I was reading Tanabe-san's comments in the strategy guide, I saw, "Tezuka-san suggested we make all the characters suspicious types like in the then-popular Twin Peaks."

**Iwata**

Did that guy who looks like Mario appear because you wanted to make someone who looked suspicious? He did look suspicious, but... (laughs)

**Tezuka**

After that, in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time<sup>12</sup> and The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask<sup>13</sup>, all kinds of suspicious characters appeared. I didn't tell them to do it that way, but personally, I did find it considerably appealing.



**Aonuma**

The staff who worked on The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time had all played The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening, so they had a sense of how far they could go with the The Legend of Zelda series.

**Tezuka**

Oh, I see.

**Iwata**

That makes sense. Tezuka-san, you broadened what was permissible for The Legend of Zelda without even realizing it.

**Tezuka**

I guess I did. Well, I'm glad I could contribute.

**Everyone**

(laughs)

12. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time: The first 3D The Legend of Zelda title. Released for the Nintendo 64 in November 1998.

13. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask: Released for the Nintendo 64 in April 2000, one year and five months after the release of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

**Aonuma**

I'm certain it was an important element in the series making a breakthrough. If we had proceeded from The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past straight to The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time without The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening in between, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time would have been different.

**Iwata**

Yes, I agree. It made a big difference that the staff knew the possibilities.

**Aonuma**

That's right.

**Iwata**

Tezuka-san, you worked on handheld The Legend of Zelda titles after that, too, didn't you?

**Tezuka**

Yes. That was together with Capcom. At that time, Yoshiki Okamoto<sup>14</sup> was at Capcom, and he wanted to make a Zelda game.

The plan was to create a remake of the first The Legend of Zelda. I thought if it was just going to be an adaptation of the first one then it should be all right.

Then, while we were talking about it, I realized he had quite a strong affection for the The Legend of Zelda games. Normally, though, I would have been resistant to leaving games like The Legend of Zelda or Super Mario Bros. to anyone else.

14. Yoshiki Okamoto: A game creator who helped develop the Street Fighter series, among other titles, while at Capcom. Currently, he is president of Game Republic Inc.

**Iwata**

I vividly remember being shocked when I heard that. I almost thought it must be some kind of mistake. Not because of Capcom, but because I thought The Legend of Zelda was a prominent franchise that Nintendo kept very close. I just assumed that it would be impossible for a major Super Mario Bros. or The Legend of Zelda game to be made by external entities.

**Tezuka**

Usually, that would be true, but Capcom works really fast, and talking to them, I could sense their enthusiasm for the series, so I thought we could trust them with it. We had them make The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons and The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages<sup>15</sup>

**Iwata**

But you were checking in on it rather frequently.

**Tezuka**

Yes. Capcom is in Osaka. Since they were so close, I visited them on numerous occasions. We hadn't dealt with them in the past, and I found the temperament with which they develop a game is different from ours.

15. The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons and Oracle of Ages: Two action-adventure games released simultaneously for Game Boy Color in February 2001.

**Iwata**

What was your impression?

**Tezuka**

They struck me as being very jock-like. (laughs) Not at all like us.

**Iwata**

What type were you Nintendo guys like?

**Tezuka**

A circle of like-minded people.

**Nakago**

Yes, that's right. You're definitely a circle of like minds. (laughs)

**Aonuma**

Like an afterschool club. (laughs)

**Iwata**

So it was the Afterschool Club of Like Minds versus the Strictly Hierarchical Athletic Types, and it was that unusual combination that brought forth The Legend of Zelda for Game Boy Color.

**Tezuka**

The first one went really well, so I thought I could leave more to them.

**Aonuma**

That led to the later The Legend of Zelda games for the DS system.

**Tezuka**

You guessed it.

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## Dealing with 'Veteran' Gamers

**Iwata**

While The Legend of Zelda was progressing with Capcom, what were you doing, Aonuma-san?

**Aonuma**

The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask had finished, and development of The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker<sup>16</sup> had begun. We were making a 3D Zelda game, and making a game for a handheld device with Capcom. The two were advancing in parallel.

**Iwata**

Two Zelda games developed together with Capcom were released, right?

**Aonuma**

In 2001, The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons and Oracle of Ages were released, and in 2004, The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap<sup>17</sup> was released. I took over the development of The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap soon after I had become a producer.

**Iwata**

And as you were making The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap, you were preparing for The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess<sup>18</sup>.

**Aonuma**

That's right. And as we were making The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, we were making The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass<sup>19</sup> for the DS.

**Iwata**

And that led to The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks.

16. The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker: An action-adventure game released in December 2002 for Nintendo GameCube.

17. The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap: An action-adventure game released in November 2004 for Game Boy Advance.

18. The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess: An action-adventure game released in December 2006 for Wii and Nintendo GameCube.

19. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass: An action-adventure game released in June 2007 as the first title in the The Legend of Zelda series for the Nintendo DS.

**Aonuma**

Yes. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass took three years to complete, and this time took two. In Zelda terms, that's smooth sailing. (laughs)







**Iwata**

Yeah, I guess it is. (laughs) Tezuka-san and Nakago-san, I heard that rather than participate directly in development of The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, you served as testers partway through.

**Tezuka**

We were advisors.

**Nakago**

I was the eldest advisor.

**Iwata**

(laughs)

**Nakago**

We played it while it was still in development, and gave feedback. I played it all the way through, and it was good.

**Aonuma**

Nakago-san, don't lie! On numerous occasions you stopped and said, "This is no good!" (laughs)

**Nakago**

Well, yeah, but...

**Aonuma**

Um...let me tell you what happened. For The Legend of Zelda games, special consideration is needed for people playing for the first time. I was a producer, so, like Miyamoto-san, I was keeping an eye on things and tightening everything up from the early stages of development.

Then, midway through, two elder advisors suddenly joined. But, since they were just testers, they quickly got beyond what I had worked on.

**Iwata**

Of course they would find problems in the places you hadn't polished up yet. (laughs)

**Aonuma**

They raked me over the coals about places I hadn't even seen yet, saying, "It's good up to here, but after that it's awful." Then I raced to catch up.

**Iwata**

I know just how harsh the language can be when two of the Manzai Trio start criticizing.

**Tezuka**

You can't pass it on to the rest of the staff, right?

**Aonuma**

Sharp words like "This is no good" aren't so bad by comparison. As they gradually get tired, they'll just sigh without saying anything! (laughs)

**Iwata**

I heard someone use the expression "veteran" gamers.

**Aonuma**

Yeah. I said that. When I passed on their feedback to the staff, we'd entered the final leg of development and no one had a moment to spare, but I had to tell them what to fix. I said, "Expanding the target user demographic is important, so even "veteran" gamers have got to be able to play it!"

**Iwata**

Ah ha ha! (laughs)

**Aonuma**

And as we talked about last time, the way to solve the puzzles this time is different.

**Iwata**

There are science puzzles, is that right?



**Aonuma**

Yes. So if our two elderly gamers were saying "I don't get it" more than we expected, than it would probably be difficult even for people who have been playing The Legend of Zelda games all along. So in the end we adjusted that somewhat.

**Nakago**

It was all right. At least Miyamoto-san didn't upend any tea tables this time.

**Iwata**

To tell the truth, I was worried about that, because he was tied up with New Super Mario Bros. Wii for so long that it looked like he didn't have a chance to see the new The Legend of Zelda game for quite a while. Some of us were worried that you wouldn't make the release date. But when I asked Miyamoto-san about it, he said it looked fine, so I was enormously relieved.

**Aonuma**

But there was that one time when the two elderly gamers went over by Miyamoto-san and the three of them started whispering. It looked to me like a counter-campaign was being started.

**Everyone**

(laughs)

**Aonuma**

I thought, "Uh-oh..." and raced over and asked what was up. They were talking about how to solve a puzzle Nakago-san couldn't solve. I said, "Nakago-san, I bet you didn't see the such-and-such in that one spot," and Miyamoto-san said, "That may be in the game, but if Nakago-san didn't see it, then other players might not see it either, which is the same as if it weren't in there at all."

**Iwata**

When you're creating the game world, it's easy to assume that players will behave a certain way.

**Aonuma**

Yeah. You shouldn't rest easy just because you've prepared something within the game.

**Iwata**

You've got to think about all kinds of players. For people who can't grab the mushroom, you've got to put in a pipe so it comes back\*.

\* See Iwata Asks: New Super Mario Bros. Wii for more on how Super Mario Bros. was designed so that everyone is sure to get the first mushroom.

**Aonuma**

I think so.

**Tezuka**

The impression the final game makes is incredibly good, though. You can really feel the enthusiasm of the developers when you're playing, and how it treats the core elements of The Legend of Zelda franchise with respect, carrying on what is good about previous games, while

adding various new elements on the side.

### **Nakago**

That's right. When you're playing it, it's like it has kept what was good about the previous game, The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass. It hasn't simply thrown out the old material.



### **Tezuka**

That's right. You mess up if you put in lots of effort to do better than before, but throw out some good things because they're old and just indiscriminately add new things. Just because something is new, you can't guarantee it's good.

### **Iwata**

That's just like with New Super Mario Bros. Wii.

### **Tezuka**

Yeah. That's what usually happens, but this time was completely different. When development ended and I was talking to the staff, they all said development was really fun this time.

### **Iwata**

Similar to The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening.

### **Tezuka**

Yes, that's right.

### **Iwata**

In my experience, when the developers say that development was fun, the final product is good.

### **Aonuma**

That's why I think development must have been fun this time. We created a satisfying game, and when I played it, I was happy.

### **Iwata**

Even dealing with "veteran" gamers. (laughs)

### **Aonuma**

I'm getting "veteran" myself. I'll be joining them before too long. (laughs)

**Everyone**

(laughs)

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# Iwata Asks

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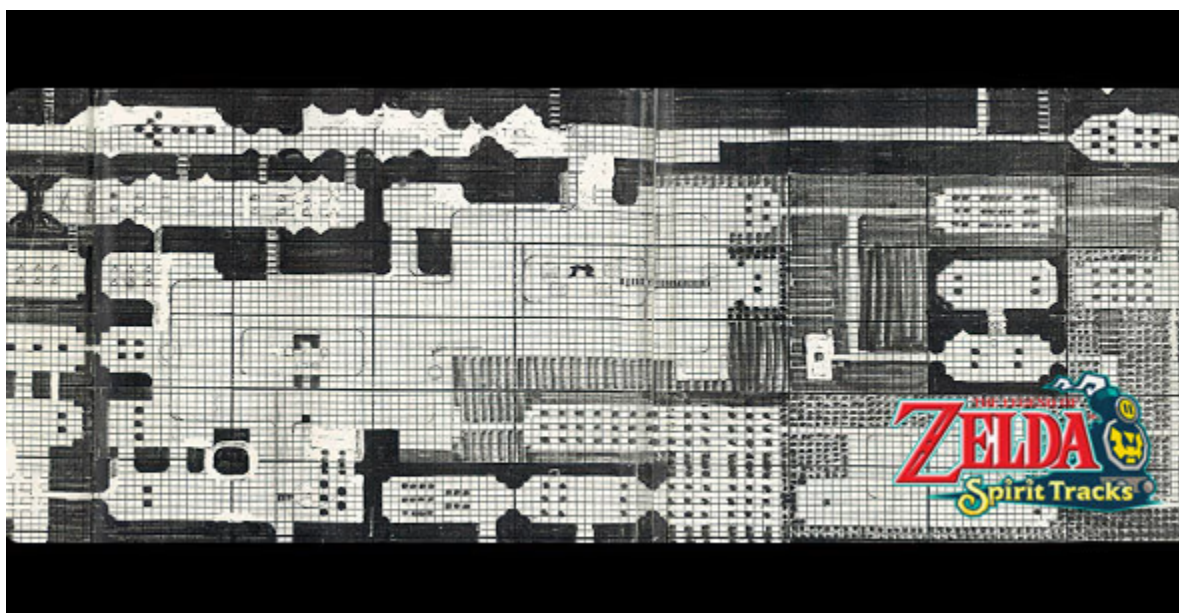
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## Bonus Stage 1: Ancient Documents from 1985

**Nakago**

This is a bit of a digression, but...

**Iwata**

By all means. (laughs)

**Nakago**

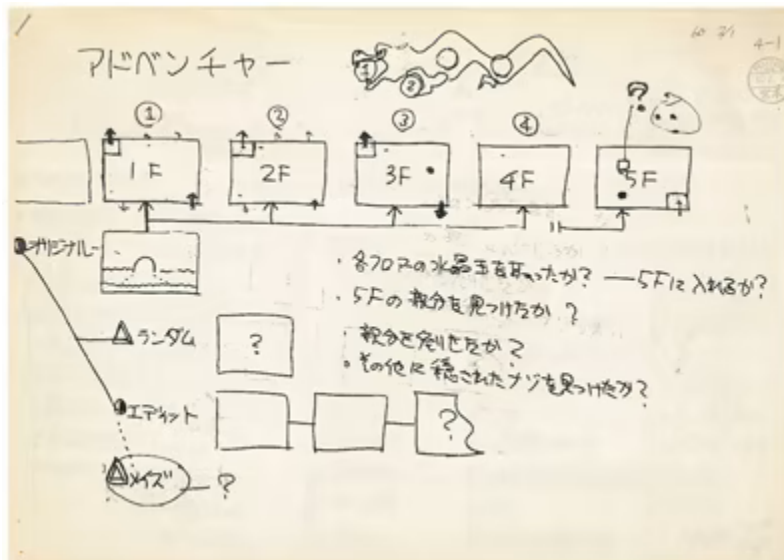
(flipping through the file in front of him) After we talked about New Super Mario Bros. Wii for "Iwata Asks," I decided to see whether what we said was accurate or not.

**Iwata**

Oh, you dug up some old documents.

**Nakago**

These are the first specifications for The Legend of Zelda.



**Iwata**

Oh, wow! It's got Miyamoto-san's personal seal on it!

**Nakago**

It says "adventure." Over the course of these few pages it doesn't just talk about the overall structure of The Legend of Zelda, but also items and enemies.

**Iwata**

Was The Legend of Zelda called Adventure at first?

**Tezuka**

I think "Adventure Mario" was written on the file binding these specifications.

**Iwata**

It's for The Legend of Zelda, but it says "Adventure Mario"?

**Nakago**

It always said "adventure." Whether it was "Mario" or "Zelda." On the second page, for items, it mentions compasses, bows and arrows, boomerangs, and gold and silver.

**Aonuma**

Cool...

**Nakago**

On the third page, labeled "Enemies," it says "Hakkai." I think that became Ganon.

(Editor's note: The Hakkai reference must be from "Chohakkai" (which is the Japanese name, and called "Zhu Balie" in Chinese), a pig-like character that appeared in the 16th century Chinese novel "Xī Yóu Jì" ("Saiyuki" in Japanese). He is typically portrayed with having a pig's head. This story is popular in the Japanese culture.)

**Iwata**

Ganon was Hakkai?

**Aonuma**

It says "Bull Demon King" here. Is that Ganon? And it says "octopus." That must be the Octorok, right? Wow... And "Eyeball" must be Gohma.

**Tezuka**

That square bit at the top indicates the size of the characters.

**Iwata**

Oh, it's two by two. So this enemy should be two by four. It includes how to actually design it from the very beginning.

**Nakago**

And it has notes designating things as small, medium-sized, or large.





**Tezuka**

It was visualized clearly from the very start.

**Iwata**

I guess it's designed with the functions in mind, but still, I'm surprised.

**Tezuka**

These specifications were written on a white board that could be copied.

**Nakago**

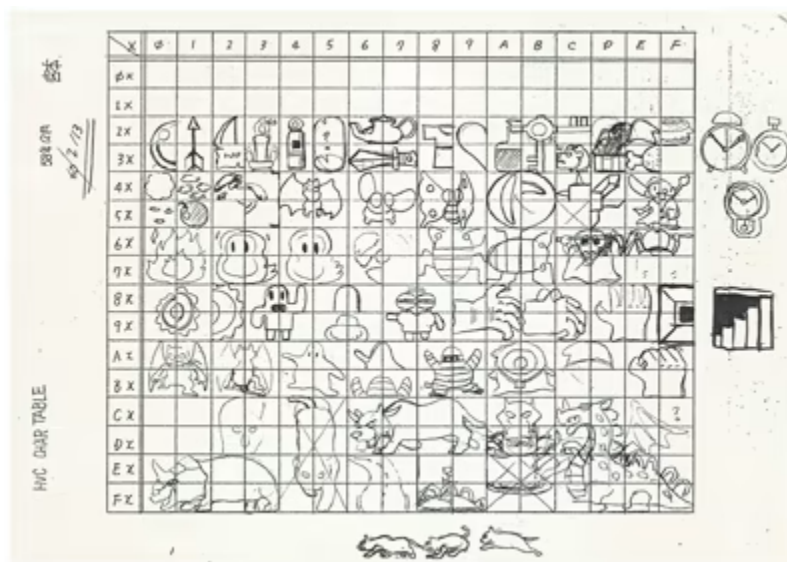
Miyamoto-san jotted all this down, and then we copied it.

**Iwata**

It's dated February 1, 1985.

**Nakago**

These are the rough sketches that came up afterward.

**Iwata**

It's dated the same year, February 13. Not even two weeks have passed since the specs were first written on the white board.

**Nakago**

That's right.

**Aonuma**

Whoa, there's even a Blade Trap.

**Iwata**

For the first thing drawn up, it's rather complete. Did you talk about it beforehand and build up ideas?

**Nakago**

I think the three of us talked it over as we did it...

**Tezuka**

Yeah.

**Nakago**

We wrote down one thing after the next, and this resulted.

**Iwata**

The original specifications were drawn up in 1985, and here we are today still making The Legend of Zelda games by basing upon these specifications.

**Aonuma**

Amazing, huh?

**Iwata**

I wonder if this is what we always mean by the Zelda essence. (laughs)

**Aonuma**

It certainly does have the appearance of a source text. Without a doubt, this is where it all started. But it's like I'm working just on his palm... (laughs)

(Editor's note: This is also from the novel "Xī Yóu Jì", where the lead character "Sun Wukong" (Son Go Ku in Japanese) finds himself not being able to escape from the palm of Buddha even though he arrogantly thought he could.

**Iwata**

Was everything here used in the first The Legend of Zelda game? I see things I don't remember.

**Nakago**

No, we didn't use all of them.

**Iwata**

I thought so.

**Nakago**

Iwata

## Nakago

And this is next...



Iwata

You've even got this?!

## Nakago

And this is the first land map for The Legend of Zelda.



**Nakago**

Back then we had some long paper, and Tezuka-san and Miyamoto-san would sit side-by-side and draw together.

**Tezuka**

We did?

**Nakago**

Yes, you did! (laughs) You drew the stuff on the left, Tezuka-san, and the right side is Miyamoto-san's. If you look closely, you can tell how marker was used to make small dots. These are rocks, and these are trees.

And you can see Miyamoto-san's personality. At first he's making individual dots, but as he gets tired of it, toward the top, he just fills in a bunch of space!

**Aonuma**

Yeah, the left and right sides do look different.

**Tezuka**

They really are different somehow.

**Iwata**

And they drew this all in one sitting.

**Nakago**

Yeah.

**Aonuma**

And it's marker, so it can't be erased. Amazing.

**Tezuka**

No, we had correction fluid, so it was all right if we made a mistake.

**Aonuma**

You should have stayed silent and just let me praise you! (laughs)

**Iwata**

Well, that's Tezuka-san's personality. (laughs)

**Nakago**

Oh, yeah, I can see where correction fluid was used.

**Aonuma**

Yeah, there it its! (laughs)

**Iwata**

But there aren't many places like that. Overall, it's quite a good batting average.

**Nakago**

The Lost Woods is there, too.

**Iwata**

I truly am surprised. Our discussion over New Super Mario Bros. Wii occasioned the unearthing of some ancient documents! (laughs)

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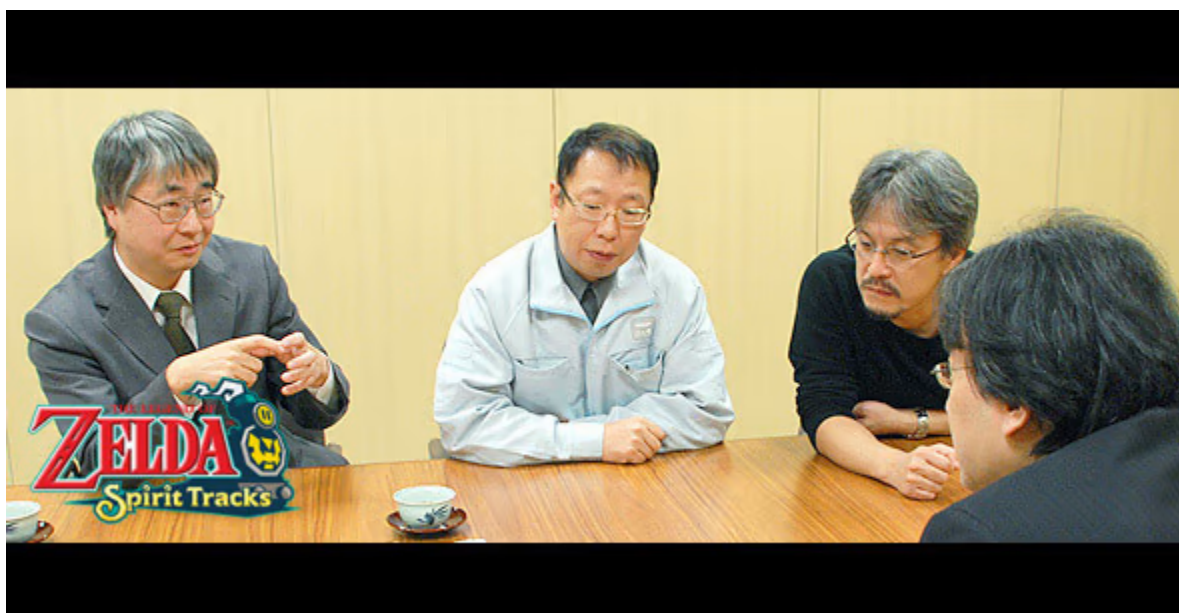
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## Bonus 2: The Untold Story of the Second Quest

### Nakago

And I've got something even more interesting today. This is the first dungeon map ever created for The Legend of Zelda.



### Tezuka

Basically, we were going to make lots of dungeons using one square per room, and lay them out like a jigsaw puzzle.

### Iwata

In order to fit in as many dungeons as possible given the limited memory, you were making them like you were doing a puzzle.

### Nakago

Right. Tezuka-san said, "I did it!" and brought this to me. I created the data exactly in line with it, but then Tezuka-san made a mistake and only used half of the data.

I said, "Tezuka-san, there's only half here. Where did the other half go?" and he was like, "What?! Oops, I messed up..." But Miyamoto-san said it was fine just like that.

### Tezuka

Heh heh heh. (laughs)

**Nakago**

So, using the half of the memory that was left over, we decided to create the Second Quest<sup>20</sup>.

**Iwata**

Huh? Just wait a second. If Tezuka-san hadn't messed up, there'd have been no Second Quest?

**Nakago**

Yes, that's right.

**Iwata**

Whaaat?! (laughs)

**Everyone**

(laughs)

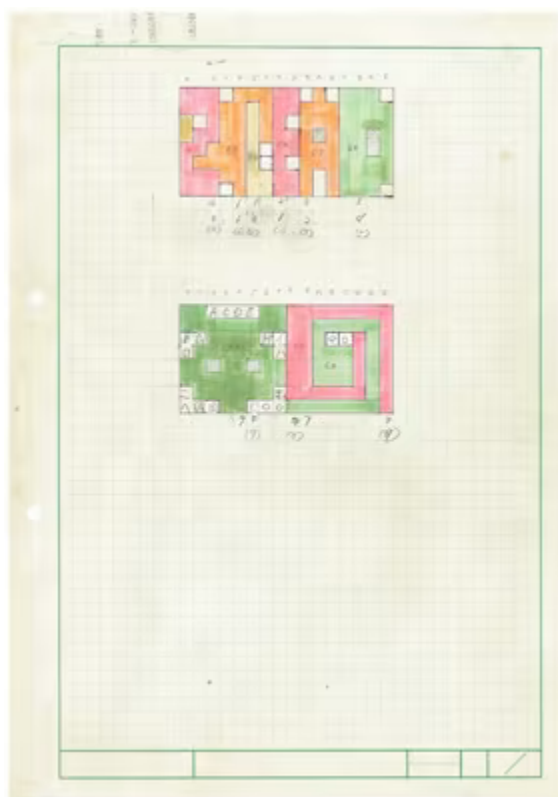
20. Second Quest: A second adventure of greater difficulty prepared for players who had cleared the original quest in The Legend of Zelda. When you play this quest, Link on the select screen changes so he's holding a sword.

**Tezuka**

Is it all right to reveal this? (laughs)

**Nakago**

But it's true! (laughs) And this is the original for the Second Quest.





**Iwata**

So this is the Second Quest resulting from Tezuka-san's mistake...

**Tezuka**

(as if suddenly remembering) Oh, that's right...

**Iwata**

Was it Miyamoto-san who suggested turning this into a second quest?

**Tezuka**

I imagine so.

**Nakago**

Yeah, it was.

**Tezuka**

He didn't tell us to just remake the game.

**Nakago**

He said this was just right.

**Aonuma**

Just right?

**Nakago**

He played it, and it felt just right.

**Iwata**

Whew! Now that's what you call turning a tight spot into an opportunity! (laughs)

**Nakago**

There's actually something I forgot to mention last time in "Iwata Asks."

**Iwata**

Are you going to bring out another ancient document? (laughs)

**Nakago**

Yes! It's for Super Mario, but...

**Iwata**

Okay, from now on this is "Iwata Forgot to Ask: New Super Mario Bros. Wii." (laughs)

## Nakago

When I first heard the basic conception for Super Mario Bros., there were five worlds.

## Iwata

There are eight now, but at first there were only five?

## Nakago

Miyamoto-san wrote them down on a sheet of A4 paper, and said, "This is what I have in mind." He'd written down the outlines of five worlds. I said, "All right," and then he said, "Actually there's something else I'd like to talk to you about..." There was actually another sheet there. He opened it up, and the other three worlds appeared.

## Iwata

In other words, he'd used an A3 sheet of paper.

## Nakago

That's right. A sheet of A3 paper folded in half. He showed me the five worlds on one side, got me to agree, and then...

## Iwata

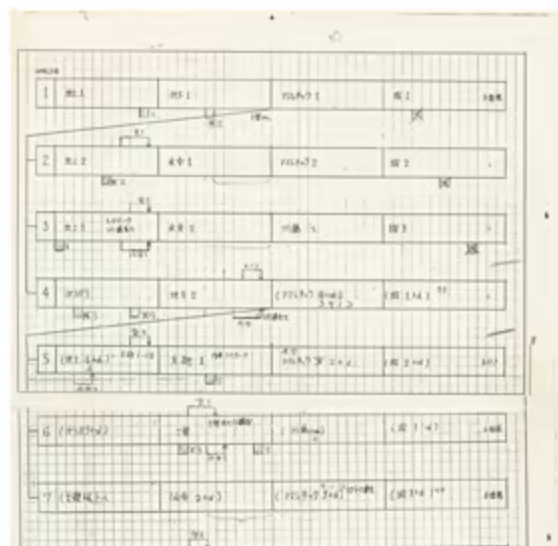
He revealed there were a few more.

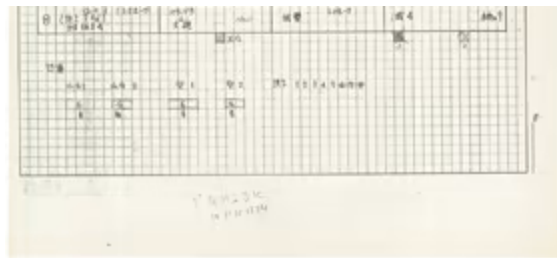
## Aonuma

What a way to get your consent! (laughs)

## Nakago

Here's that paper. It says "Underwater 2 +  $\alpha$ ". That means "Underwater 2," which was planned for 3-2, plus a little more. In other words, the idea was to import the underwater stage of World 3-2 into World 7-2 without changing the geographical forms, but increasing the number of enemies. In the end, there was no "Underwater 2," and 7-2 was "Underwater 1 (2-2) +  $\alpha$ ."





**Iwata**

So even though the worlds increased, you used the same material, so it was no big problem.

**Tezuka**

He wasn't foisting an unreasonable task onto us. He was suggesting something possible.

**Nakago**

All the while plotting how to get me to agree. (laughs) I forgot to mention it before, so I thought I absolutely must this time.

**Iwata**

I'm surprised Super Mario Bros. was so fully laid out from the beginning.

**Tezuka**

The other day, Miyamoto-san also saw this for the first time in a long while.

**Iwata**

What was his reaction?

**Tezuka**

He was floored.

**Everyone**

(laughs)

**Nakago**

When I told him about his five-worlds ploy, he said, "Yeah, I did that on purpose."

**Tezuka**

And he even said, "I pulled the same stunts back then."

**Nakago**

He hasn't changed in 25 years!

**Aonuma**

With this, and the map for The Legend of Zelda we just saw, you were making games after establishing a view of the whole picture at the start. Learning that alone makes me happy I came today.

**Nakago**

It makes a big difference whether you have a vision of the complete picture or not.

**Aonuma**

Right as rain! Oh, Miyamoto-san always says that.

**Tezuka**

I think you mean "clear as day."

**Aonuma**

You're right. That was it. Miyamoto-san likes things to be clear as day. And he absolutely loves the situation where he can say, "I see." He orders us to persuade him to be able to say, "I see."



**Iwata**

He wants to hear it from the others, and he wants to say it himself.

**Tezuka**

Yeah. I think recently he's realized that himself. That he wants to be put into the situation where he can say it.

**Aonuma**

He likes to say "I see."

**Iwata**

He lives for it.

**Nakago**

I see...

**Everyone**

(laughs)

**Iwata**

It's fate that someone like that made The Legend of Zelda.

**Aonuma**

I think so, too.

**Iwata**

I mean, when you're playing The Legend of Zelda there are places where you want to say "I see."

**Aonuma**

I completely agree. I see.

**Everyone**

(laughs)

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